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SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: MORE CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY

¶1. On June 27, President Yahya Jammeh appointed a new Secretary of State (Minister) for Youth and Sports and a new Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). The new Sports Minister is former army lieutenant Sheriff Gomez, while Benedict Jammeh, until recently the Inspector General of Police, is the new Director General of the NIA. The latter change has had a cascading effect in both the police force and military intelligence unit of the army. The reasons for the changes remain unclear. END SUMMARY

¶2. The personnel changes follow the surprise removal of Mass Axi Gye as Secretary of State for Youth and Sports. No reasons were given for the sacking of Mr. Gye, who joined the cabinet nine months ago. However, unconfirmed reports suggest that he was removed for his department's role in the hiring of Belgian soccer coach Paul Put to manage The Gambia's national team. Reports say Paul Put is under a three year ban in Belgium for match-fixing and the Belgian authorities are now asking the world governing body FIFA to make it a worldwide ban. Observers say that if the Belgian request is granted, the Gambian team would be without a coach in this crucial stage of the joint Africa Cup of Nations and World Cup qualifying rounds -- a serious blow in soccer-crazed The Gambia.

THE NEW MINISTER

¶3. The new Sports Minister, 48 year-old Sheriff Gomez, is a former army lieutenant who earned a B.A. degree in English, History and Economics from Military Academy in Pakistan. He also holds an M.Sc. degree in Purchasing and Supply Chain Management from the London Metropolitan University. At the time of his appointment, Gomez held three different positions simultaneously: Assistant Director of National Youth Service Scheme, Acting Assistant Director and Coordinator of National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) and Coordinator of GAMJOBS, a Gambian Government and United Nations Development Program project focusing on youth and women's employment.

NEW INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

¶4. The new Director General of the National Intelligence Agency, Benedict Jammeh, was the Inspector General of Police (IGP) until June 16, when he was suddenly and without explanation redeployed to the judiciary as a Senior Magistrate. He had barely taken up his position at Bundung Court before he was appointed to head the NIA. He now replaces Major Malamin Jarjue, who has been redeployed to his former army job as Head of Military Intelligence.

NEW POLICE CHIEF

¶5. Jammeh was succeeded as IGP by the Crime Management Coordinator (CMC), Commissioner Ensa Badjie. The changes in the police force follow the unexplained arrest in April and subsequent detention of two senior officers: former CMC Burama Dibba, and former Head of the Serious Crime Unit, Ebrima Jammeh. The two former officers have been held for more than two months without charge.

COMMENT

16. What ever the reasons for the removal of Benedict Jammeh as Inspector General of Police, it is now clear that he has not fallen out of favor with the President as once rumored. He comes from the same village as the head of state and, in being appointed as head of the intelligence agency, clearly has his trust. Post remains concerned over the detention of senior police officials without charge, and will watch closely to see what develops in their cases now that the personnel flux in the security forces has been resolved -- for now. END COMMENT.

WELLS